



The Greenland Crisis

Robert Ellis

(International Advisor at the Research Institute for European and American Studies in Athens)

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Karl Marx [mentions](#) Hegel's remark that all great world-historic facts and personages appear twice. However, Marx adds, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. The establishment of the [Coalition Provisional Authority](#) in Iraq, which morphed into a long drawn-out struggle, is a good example. After the special operation in Venezuela, President Trump's [declaration](#) "we are going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition" falls into the second category.

The president also ignores [the Pottery Barn rule](#).

In addition, President Trump has [made clear](#) the U.S. needs Greenland from the standpoint of national security, and it has created a furore that America intends to take over the country. Trump has mentioned the Louisiana Purchase but another precedent

is the sale of the Danish West Indies to the USA in 1917 and Alaska from Russia in 1867.

Quite apart from its strategic importance, with [its mineral wealth](#) Greenland is prime real estate, and as the new U.S. envoy to Greenland, Louisiana governor Jeff Landry, has [stated](#), “Our president is a business president.”

When Trump in his first term of office expressed interest in buying Greenland, Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen, who can be abrasive, found the idea ‘[absurd](#)’, and Trump retaliated by calling her ‘[nasty](#).’ However, secretary of state Marco Rubio has [confirmed](#) this is the president’s intention. In the final instance, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt has not ruled out [military intervention](#).

In [an extensive interview](#) with the New York Times the U.S. president explains his compass is not international law but his own morality and mind. He also [explains](#) his preoccupation with buying Greenland. With regard to [the 1951 treaty with Denmark](#), which gives the USA the right to open bases on Greenland, Trump believes ownership is important.

“It’s what I feel is psychologically needed for success. I think that ownership gives you a thing that you can’t do whether you’re talking about a lease or a treaty. Ownership gives you things and elements that you can’t get from just signing a document that you can have a base.”

Trump also states it may be a choice between acquiring Greenland and preserving the NATO alliance. However, Mette Frederiksen [warns](#) that if the U.S. chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, “then everything stops, including NATO and thus the security that has been established since the end of the Second World War.”

To invoke [Article 4](#) would lead to the disintegration of NATO. Ben Hodges, former commander of U.S. Army Europe, has [advised Denmark](#) to deploy a force to Greenland together with other NATO countries to reassure America. Italy’s prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has also [urged a stronger role for NATO](#) in the Arctic region. The U.K. is also [in talks with European allies](#) about sending a force to Greenland to allay Donald Trump’s fears.

By refusing to abide by international law, the president of the United States is signaling to his fellow autocrats in Russia and China that a takeover of Ukraine and Taiwan is acceptable.

The European response has been [unusually forceful](#), and [a map of Greenland with the American flag](#), posted by Katie Miller, the wife of Stephen Miller, the White House’s Deputy Chief of Staff, is seen as a provocation. [Mujtaba Rahman](#) from the Eurasia Group believes a U.S. landgrab would be the end of the NATO alliance and do irreparable damage to the EU.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio is caught between a rock and a hard place. He plans to “[have conversations](#)” this week with Danish officials on Wednesday about Greenland but whatever line he takes will have to be balanced with the hard line taken by Vice President J.D. Vance. As Vance said in [an interview](#) with Fox News:

“The entire missile defense infrastructure is partially dependent on Greenland. Have the Europeans, have the Danes done a proper job of securing Greenland and making sure that it can continue to serve as an anchor for world security and missile defense? And the answer is, obviously they haven’t. They’ve under-invested in their security, they haven’t done a good job of securing that area, that landmass.”

At the same time, the Senate has advanced [a bipartisan measure](#) to block the Trump administration from conducting further military action in Venezuela. The move to take over Greenland also faces [opposition from GOP leaders](#).

[A Danish colony](#) since the 18th century, Greenland was incorporated into Denmark in 1953 and granted home rule in 1979 and self-rule in 2009. Greenland’s economy (half its budget) is dependent on Danish subsidies and welfare benefits, and Denmark’s attitude towards the Inuit people, like that of America and Australia towards their indigenous population, has been paternalistic. For example, in December Denmark [apologized and awarded compensation](#) to Inuit women for their forced contraception.

Denmark has ignored Greenland’s strategic importance. In 2010, when Danish foreign minister Lene Espersen was chair of the Arctic Council, [she chose to go on holiday](#) with her family in Mallorca rather than attend a meeting of the Council together with US secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov.

Ahead of the NATO summit in London in December 2019 Mette Frederiksen planned to [prioritize](#) anti-submarine detection and aerial surveillance in the form of radar, satellites and aircraft, but [this failed to materialize](#).

[The GIUK Gap](#) – between Greenland, Iceland and the UK, constitutes a maritime chokepoint, connecting the Arctic Ocean to the Atlantic. Particularly since the resurgence of Russian naval activity it is of strategic importance. China, with its submarines and ice-breakers, has declared itself a “[near-Arctic power](#).”

Denmark closed down its radar system on the Faroe Islands in 2007 and has now contracted with Lockheed Martin to provide its [TPY-4 radar system](#). The system is not expected to be [up and running](#) before 2029 or 2030.

Denmark will invest [\\$4.26 billion](#) to increase its defense capability in the Arctic, which includes 16 more F-35 fighter jets, inspection vessels, [maritime patrol aircraft](#) and [long-range maritime drones](#). The downside here is also [late delivery](#).

Both the Danish and Greenland foreign ministers will meet with Marco Rubio in an attempt to reach an agreement. Greenlanders overwhelmingly [reject](#) becoming part of the United States and are equally [in favour of independence](#). However, this is hardly viable for a population of 57,000.

A solution could lie in a [Free Association Agreement](#) such as the U.S. already has with the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau. This will guarantee Greenland's security and economic development in a mutually beneficial manner that the current approach fails to do.